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MICAH Z. KELLNER
65th Assembly District

December 24, 2007

Matthew Daus
Commissioner/Chairman
New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission
40 Rector Street
New York, NY 10004

Dear Chairman Daus:

At our November 7, 2007 meeting I was pleased to learn that the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) is working on the development of a fully accessible, fuel-efficient taxicab, which you referred to as the Taxi of Tomorrow. While I applaud and support your efforts, I am concerned that this vehicle is being designed behind closed doors, without adequate input from the disability community.

Upon learning of a panel meeting earlier this month on the design of the Taxi of Tomorrow, I reached out to your office and was told that the meeting was closed to the public, but that the disability community would be represented on the ten-person panel by Commissioner Matthew Sapolin of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. While Commissioner Sapolin is a valuable advocate for the disability community, and I welcome and appreciate his participation in this process, I believe the development of the Taxi of Tomorrow would be best served by greater input from the broader disability community that will ultimately use these taxis.

We need stakeholders at the table who will be consumers of this product in order to ensure that it is successful. While I understand that a representative of every category of disability cannot be included in the Taxi of Tomorrow working group, I would like to suggest that, at a minimum, the panel attempt to reflect the diversity of the disabled community by including a wheelchair-user and an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing. I believe these two constituencies, each with their own unique needs and perspective, would make a significant contribution to the development of the Taxi of Tomorrow.

As we saw with the debacle that was the modified Chevrolet Uplander, failing to adequately consult stakeholders in the disability community resulted in wasted time and a product that simply does not meet their needs. We should be weary of repeating these errors of the past, especially when there are many fine candidates who would be excited to take part in defining the Taxi of Tomorrow.

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I urge you to open up this process and bring members of the disability community to the table to ensure that all stakeholders are represented and that the Taxi of Tomorrow is a taxi that will truly serve the needs of all New Yorkers.

If you would like to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me at (212) 860-4906.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Micah Z. Kellner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Micah Z. Kellner
Assembly Member

MZK/mah

Cc: Hon. Matthew Sapolin, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities
Taxis for All Campaign
Disabled Riders Coalition
Hearing Access Program